

# NOTES ON THE TAXONOMIC STATUS OF *ASCIA MONUSTE CRAMERI* (LEPIDOPTERA: PIERIDAE)

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**ABSTRACT.**— The problematic status of *Ascia monuste crameri* Holland is discussed. Further evidence is submitted that supports its placement as a synonym of *A. m. monuste* (Linnaeus).

**KEY WORDS:** Caribbean, distribution, Florida, Nearctic, Neotropical, South America, Surinam, type locality, USA, West Indies.

Since its description, the status of *Ascia monuste crameri* Holland has remained obscure. Its description has been attributed to the revised edition of *The Butterfly Book* (Holland, 1931b), but actually it was described earlier the same year in the *Annals of the Carnegie Museum* (Holland, 1931a). Although Holland (1931a,b) inconsistently referred to *A. m. crameri* as a form, variety, and subspecies, it is generally believed that subspecific status was intended and McDunnough (1938), dos Passos (1964), and Miller and Brown (1981) treated it accordingly. No type locality was formally designated. Holland (1931b) declared *A. m. crameri* "common in Florida" and figured a male specimen (Plate LXII, fig. 17), identified as "type" on the figure legend. This figure, and its association with Florida, has resulted in confusion over the correct taxonomic position of *A. m. crameri*.

Despite his reference to Florida, Holland's (1931b) figured specimen of *A. m. crameri* clearly represents the nominate subspecies from Central or South America, characterized by large size, more extensive dorsal forewing markings, and well-developed marginal spots on the dorsal hindwings. Holland (1931b) himself distinguished *A. m. crameri* by its larger size and noted that his figured specimen possessed more well defined "dark spots" on the ventral hindwings. Floridian *A. m. phileta* (Fabricius) are less robust and very rarely possess such an exaggerated pattern. As a result, Comstock (1943) concluded that *A. m. crameri* should be placed in the synonymy of *A. m. monuste*. Holland's figure also prompted Forbes (1960) to propose that it is "probably purely tropical." Nonetheless, due to Holland's allusion to Florida, Miller and Brown (1981) hesitantly designated "Florida" as the type locality and synonymized *A. m. crameri* under the Floridian subspecies *A. m. phileta*. However, in the overlooked original description, Holland (1931a) characterized *A. m. crameri* as "larger than specimens taken in the early spring of the year in Florida and somewhat differently marked from the insect figured by Kleemann, which must be accepted as the typical form of *monuste*." Because Holland differentiated *A. m. crameri* from spring specimens of *A. monuste* in Florida, *A. m.*

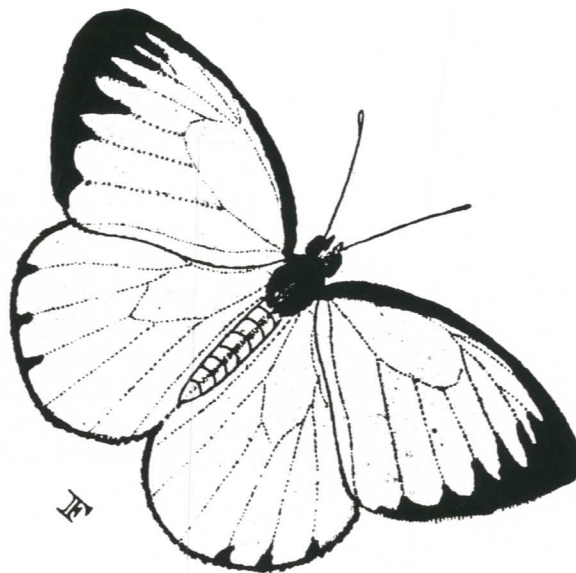


Fig. 1. Cramer ([1775-76]) figure of *Ascia monuste*.

*crameri* cannot be accepted as a subspecific synonym of *A. m. phileta*, further supporting its placement under the nominate subspecies.

Miller and Brown (1981) could not locate Holland's purported "type" of *A. m. crameri* in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and were likewise skeptical of a Floridian origin. A recent re-examination of all *A. monuste* in the CMNH also failed to locate the specimen (J. E. Rawlins, pers. comm.). Martin and Truxal (1955) listed several specimens of *A. m. crameri* from Florida ("June-Aug.") in the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, but no Floridian specimens resembling Holland's figure are currently deposited in the museum collection (J. P. Donahue, pers. comm.). Despite Holland's supposed "type", evidence suggests that a type specimen never existed.

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Holland (1931a) stated that he "concluded to give a varietal name to that form of *Ascia* (*Pieris*) *monuste* figured by Cramer and . . . designated it, therefore, as *Ascia monuste* var. *crameri*." Holland (1931b) later added that his figured specimen of *A. m. crameri* "corresponds more nearly with the figure given by Cramer." Holland's specimen is indeed comparable to the phenotype of *A. monuste* figured by Cramer ([1775-76]) (Pl. CXLI, fig. F) (Fig. 1). Although Cramer ([1775-76]) erroneously gave the origin of his specimen as "China", it was likely collected in Surinam (Dutch Guiana), South America, where many of his Neotropical specimens originated. Comstock (1943) and Brown and Heineman (1972) also recognized the Cramer phenotype as that found in Surinam. Holland's references to the Cramer figure imply that the description of *A. m. crameri* was based solely on Cramer's figure and Holland simply depicted a similar specimen, loosely identified as "type", in order to illustrate his concept of *A. m. crameri*. Conversely, his use of the term "type" may have been a misprint for "typical" with regard to the Cramer figure. Holland (1931b) occasionally used the term "typical" to denote specimens depicted on his plates. Moreover, Holland (1931b) referred to his figure of *A. m. crameri* as "type" only on the figure legend, not within the text of his book as he had routinely done for other type specimens.

Most of the remaining Cramer specimens are deposited in the Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum (National Museum of Natural History), Leiden, Netherlands. On the basis of auction lists dating from the early nineteenth century, Cramer's *A. monuste* arrived at the museum, but much of this material has been exchanged or discarded since that time and no specimen akin to his figure has been found (R. de Jong, pers. comm.). Unless a specimen can be located, Cramer's figure of *A. m. monuste* should serve as the type of *A. m. crameri* and "Surinam" can provisionally serve as the type locality. Holland (1931b) occasionally used extralimital specimens on his plates to depict North American species, but it may never be understood why he attributed such an inappropriate phenotype to Florida.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank John E. Rawlins (Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA), Julian P. Donahue (Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, CA), and Rienk de Jong (Nationaal Natuurhistorisch Museum, Leiden, Netherlands), for their assistance in searching for specimens. Regina Entorf, of the Wittenberg University Library (Springfield, OH), graciously supplied information from rare publications deposited in the dos Passos literature collection. Frederick H. Ringe (American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY) also provided assistance.

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